

NEWS RELEASE

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Idaho Employment Hits Record in December

More Idahoans found jobs in December than in any other month in 20 years, pushing total employment to a record 728,600 and the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate down to 5.7 percent, its lowest level in over five years.

Preliminary estimates by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics showed nearly 3,800 Idaho workers found jobs in December, the largest single-month increase since January 1994. That surge dropped the unemployment rate four-tenths of a percentage point, matching the jobless rate in October 2008.

Idaho's unemployment rate has dropped a full percentage point since October, reducing the ranks of the unemployed by more than 7,300 as the labor force expanded slightly in December. Employers across the state maintained payrolls at over 645,000, the highest December level since the end of the expansion in 2007.

Employment and unemployment figures for 2013 and 2012 will be reassessed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics over the next two months, and possible revisions will be released in March.

The plunge in the jobless rate last fall dropped the average annual unemployment rate to 6.3 percent for 2013, eight-tenths of a point below the 2012 average and the lowest annual rate since 2008.

The year-end improvement in Idaho's employment picture widened the distance between the state and national jobless rates to a full percentage point, the biggest gap since last June. The national unemployment rate fell three-tenths of a point in December to 6.7 percent. Idaho's rate has been below the national rate for more than 12 years.

Employment services, call centers, private education, other services like car repair and government at all levels made up the limited number of economic sectors where employers fell short of maintaining payrolls at the average level of the previous five years. New hires to fill both new jobs and existing openings totaled 12,100, just short of the December totals in both 2012 and 2007 when the recession began.

Overall, Idaho's economy had 2.2 percent more jobs in December than a year earlier while the nation ran 1.6 percent ahead of December 2012.

Despite the jump in employment, the percentage of Idahoans over 16 in the labor force in December remained at 63.9 percent for the third straight month. That is the lowest rate in 32 years, primarily reflecting the initial exodus of baby boomers from the workplace. December's statewide labor force, however, was still 2,000 lower than a year earlier. The national participation rate fell two-tenths to 62.8 percent in December.

Historically, Idaho's labor force participation climbed as high as 70.9 percent in October and November 1998 from a low of 63.9 percent in January 1982.

The number of workers without jobs in December fell to 44,000, over 23,000 below the recession peak in September 2010. With the decline in unemployed has come a significant reduction in unemployment insurance benefits. In December \$14.1 million in state and federal benefits were paid to an average of 13,200 idled workers a week, down 38 percent from \$21.4 million paid a year earlier to over 21,000 workers a week. Federal extended benefits ended in December.

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For the year, total state and federal benefits of \$192 million were paid to an average of 12,300 workers a week. That compared to benefits totaling \$299 million paid to a weekly average of 21,200 during 2012.

Despite the dramatic decline in the statewide rate, 10 of Idaho's 44 counties posted increases in their rates from November, and a half dozen more were unchanged. But all five metropolitan areas saw their rates decline.

Oneida County's jobless rate slipped to 2.9 percent for the lowest in the state while only three counties - Clearwater, Shoshone and Adams - had double-digit percentage rates. Clearwater's was the highest at 11 percent, unchanged from November.

Twenty-seven counties recorded rates below 6 percent, up from 25 counties in November.

Seasonally Adjusted Data	12/13	11/13	12/12
Civilian Labor Force	772,600	772,100	774,600
Unemployment	44,000	47,300	49,000
% Labor Force Unemployed	5.7	6.1	6.3
Total Employment	728,600	724,800	725,600

Unadjusted Forecast Data

Civilian Labor Force	770,500	771,200	771,200
Unemployment	42,100	41,400	49,500
% Labor Force Unemployed	5.5	5.4	6.4
Total Employment	728,400	729,800	721,700

Annual Average Data	2013	2012	2011
Civilian Labor Force	772,700	773,300	766,600
Unemployment	48,500	54,600	63,700
% Labor Force Unemployed	6.3	7.1	8.3
Total Employment	724,200	718,700	702,900

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